

PATENT

METHOD OF DEVELOPING LATENT FINGERPRINTS

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to the development of latent fingerprints and particularly to the development of such prints on a porous substrate.

Description of the Prior Art

The term “physical developer” as used in the forensic finger print art refers to the visualization of the oily components deposited by the ridge pattern of a person’s fingertip i.e., fingerprint area, onto a porous substrate such as paper. It is to be noted that the term “fingerprint” or “fingerprint area” as used herein includes palm as well as foot prints.

Typically the physical developer technique involves the reduction of a silver salt, in solution, to elemental silver which precipitates and adsorbs onto the surface of latent prints thus developing them physically so that they may be visualized as gray images. This method has several shortcomings. First, the silver salt (silver nitrate) is costly, toxic, readily reduced by organic contaminants, and is typically unstable when exposed to light. Second, the method also involves several steps and typically requires lengthy development time to visualize the latent prints. Third, the documents must generally be pretreated with an acid solution in order to reduce darkening of the paper background containing the latent prints. Fourth, the redox chemicals are hazardous. Fifth, the process typically requires the use of purified, distilled water. Sixth, the processing equipment must be kept scrupulously clean to prevent reduction of the silver salt. Seventh, the working solution is unstable and is generally usable only for several hours up to a few days if properly stored away from light. Eighth, the processed documents continue to darken over time when exposed to air and light which drowns out the visualized prints unless they are treated with bleach. Ninth, the visualized prints, because they are grey, cannot be readily seen on black, dark, or deeply colored papers. Tenth, the spent chemicals are considered hazardous waste.

1 I have discovered a method utilizing 8-quinolinolate complexes formed by many of the
2 reagents utilized in inkless fingerprint systems, which overcomes the above problems. Inkless
3 systems have been developed for enabling a user to take the fingerprints of an individual while
4 present as contrasted with the development of a latent fingerprint. Such inkless systems rely on the
5 reaction of two chemical reagents at the time of fingerprint development. Typically a nonstaining
6 first reagent (color formers) such as a transition metal salt is applied to a person's fingertips and a
7 second reagent (developer), such as 8-hydroxyquinoline or it's derivative, is pre-applied to or
8 inherent in the recording medium such as paper. The reagents remain isolated until the fingerprint
9 is taken. See, for example, U.S. Patents Nos. 4,029,012 ("012 patent"); 4,182,261 and 4,262,623.
10 More recently the use of a chelating agent has allowed the two reagents in solution to be located in
11 the same container by preventing the reagents from chemically reacting until exposed to the moisture
12 from the skin and/or the recording medium. See U.S. Patent No. 6,488,750.

13 Summary of the Invention

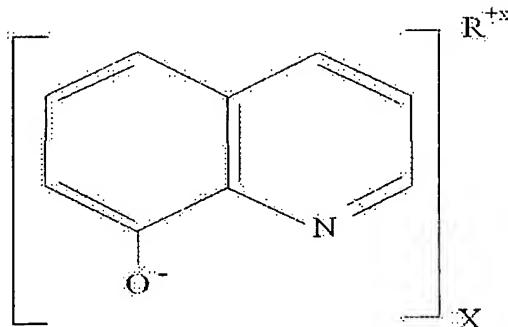
14 The present invention relies on a solution of an 8-quinolinolate complex formed by the
15 reaction of such reagents to provide a colorant product, e.g., white, yellow, brown, green, grey, black,
16 etc., or a colorless, but fluorescent, product which is adsorbed onto the oily surface formed by the
17 ridge pattern of a latent fingerprint deposited on a porous substrate such as paper to develop the print.
18 In accordance with the present invention, an 8-quinolinolate complex formed, for example, by a
19 solution of 8-quinolinol or 8-hydroxyquinoline, or it's derivatives (hereinafter collectively referred
20 to as "8-quinolinol"), and a sufficient amount of transition metal salt to form a complexed reaction
21 product. A description of 8-hydroxyquinoline derivatives is set forth in the '012 patent and the
22 contents of that patent are incorporated herein by reference. The solution is then applied to a porous
23 substrate, such as paper, containing the latent fingerprint. The soluble complex from the solution
24 is adsorbed onto the oily surface left by the latent print and subsequently precipitates. The solution
25 absent the precipitate is then removed from the substrate, for example, by a water rinse, leaving a
26 two dimensional image (color or colorless, but fluorescent) of the ridge pattern of the person's
27 finger.

28 The features and steps of the present invention, which are believed to be novel, are set forth
29 in the appended claims. The invention, as to its organization and advantages, may best be
30 understood by reference to the following description.

1 Description of the Preferred Embodiment

2 In accordance with the present invention, as a first step, a solution of an 8-quinolinolate
3 complex is prepared for subsequent application to a porous substrate, e.g., paper, containing the
4 latent fingerprint to be developed.

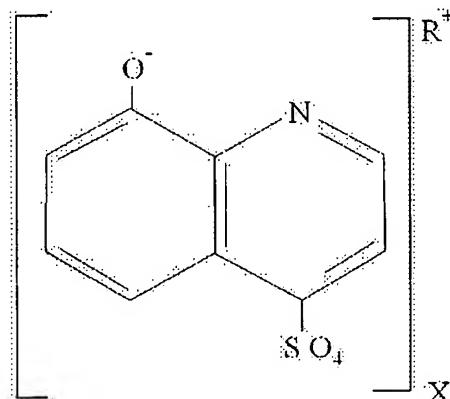
5 Generically an 8-quinolinolate complex may be illustrated as follows:



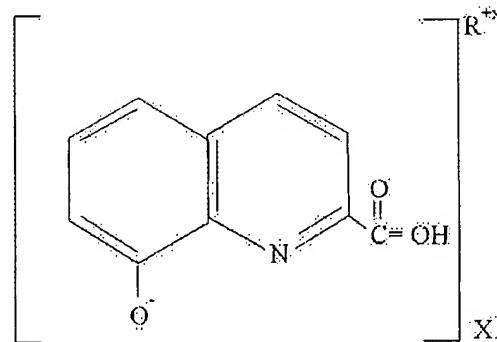
16 Where X = valence of complexed ion and

17 Where R = positively charged complexing ion (radical), e.g., metal ammonium or amino (-
18 NH₂) group ion.

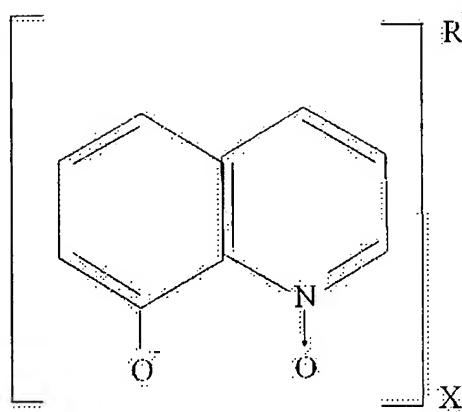
19 Examples of 8-quinolinolate derivative complexes are illustrated below:



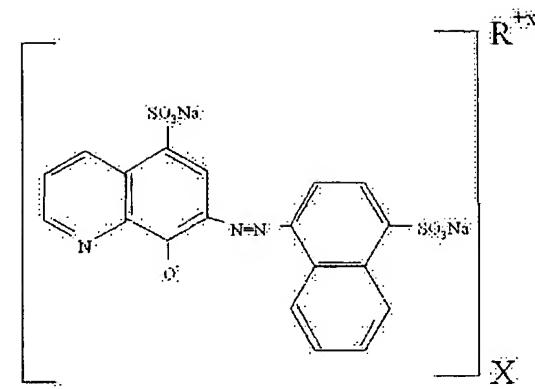
29 Using 8-quinolinol sulfate



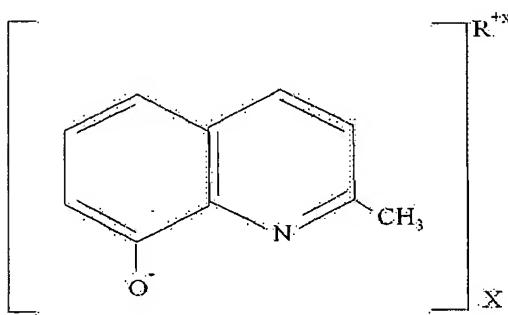
29 Using 8-hydroxyquinolene
30 2-carboxylic acid



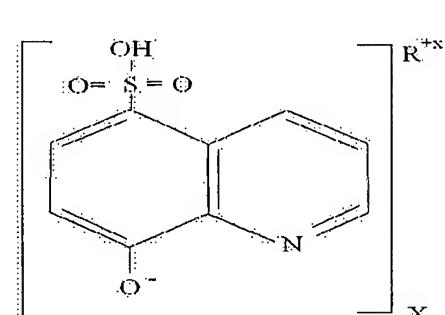
Using 8-hydroxyquinoline N-oxide



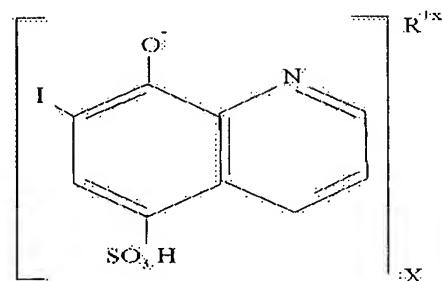
Using 8-hydroxy-7-(2-sulfo-1-naphthylazo)-5-quinoline-sulfonic acid, disodium salt



Using 2-methyl 8-quinolinol

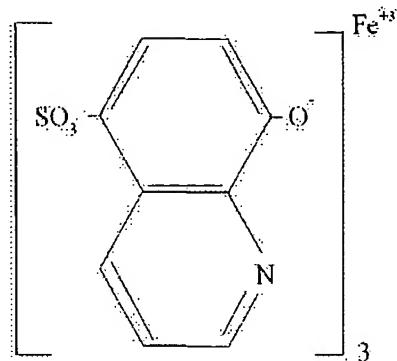
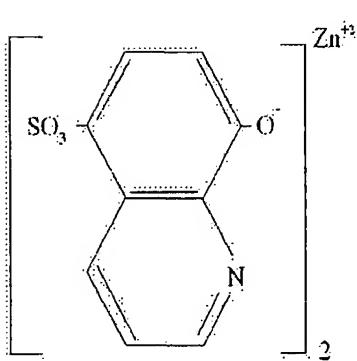


Using 8-hydroxyquinoline 5-sulfonic acid



Using 8-hydroxyquinoline 7-iodo 5-sulfonic acid

1 Examples of 8-quinoline complexed with a metal salt are illustrated below:
2



An aqueous solution of one or more metal salts and 8-hydroxyquinoline sulfate, preferably in stoichiometric amounts, produce stable complexes that may be colored, e.g., white, yellow, brown, green, grey, black, or essentially colorless, but fluorescent, or a combination thereof. The method employs the phenomenon of phase transition whereby the soluble complex is adsorbed onto the oily surface of the latent print where it is insoluble and subsequently precipitates. A phase transition catalyst may be employed to expedite the process, but this is typically not necessary. Optimal results are obtained from very dilute solutions of the metal salt, usually in the range of about 0.005% to 0.1% molar concentrations. The 8-hydroxyquinoline compound is preferably stoichiometrically concentrated according to the valence of the metal ion(s).

It should be noted that metals, such as copper and silver, are not easy to work with because of the insoluble precipitates that are formed. Other metals, such as barium and arsenic, are toxic and thus generally undesirable. Excellent results have been obtained using the chloride salts of the following metals: Li, Ca, Sr, Cr, Ni, Co, Fe, Al, Zr, Mn, and Zn. Mg, Mo, Ti, V and Ga are also candidates. Any water soluble salt of the metals may be used, but pH can have an impact on fluorescence and on the solubility of reaction product. The sulfate of 8-quinolinol is preferred as the complexing agent because of cost, availability, and high water solubility.

To visualize latent prints using this method on white or pale paper, it is preferably to use a metal that produces a colored complexes such as iron. On dark papers a metal producing a fluorescent complex using aluminum, calcium, or zinc is preferred or a nonmetal ionic molecule such as ammonium. A mixture of complexed metals may be used to produce latent prints that are

1 both colored and fluorescent so as to make the working solution universal with respect to all hues
2 of paper.

3 Examples of specific formulations and the results:

4 Colored Fingerprints: A 0.18750 molar solution of 8-hydroxyquinoline sulfate with a 0.00625
5 molar concentration of ferric chloride is prepared in water. A piece of white bond paper having
6 substantially oily, latent print residues was immersed into the solution for about three seconds, then
7 immediately rinsed in running tap water. The result was dark grey fingerprints visible against lighter
8 grey background.

9 Fluorescent Fingerprints: 0.00625 M aqueous solutions of the chlorides of lithium, calcium,
10 strontium, manganese, aluminum, chromium, and zinc were prepared. To each solution, a
11 stoichiometric amount of 8-hydroxyquinoline sulfate was admixed. Strips of black, gel-pen paper
12 having oily fingerprints thereon was immersed for about three seconds into each of the solutions,
13 then immediately rinsed in running tap water. The result from every solution was highly fluorescent,
14 green fingerprints visible in long-wave ultra-violet light. The shelf life of these solutions seems to
15 be indefinite.

16 Mixing the solutions of ferric chloride with zinc chloride and 8-quinolinol sulfate produced
17 fingerprints on a variety of papers visible as either grey in ordinary light or as fluorescent green in
18 ultra-violet light.

19 The colored method is premixed as "A" (8-hydroxyquinoline sulfate) and "B" (metal salt)
20 solutions which have indefinite shelf lives. They are mixed in equal volumes to prepare a working
21 solution that is usable for 2-3 weeks. The fluorescent method is premixed as a single working
22 solution having an indefinite shelf life.

23 The present invention provides a simple and effective method of developing latent prints on
24 a variety of porous substrates. Various modifications of the preferred embodiment may occur to
25 those skilled in the art without involving a departure from the spirit and scope of the invention as
26 defined by the appended claims.